

Minutes
Rowe School Committee

January 10th, 2012 at 6:00 P.M.
Rowe Elementary School

Present: Chair Bill Loomis, Lisa Danek Burke, Lisa Miller
Other Attendees: Patricia Bell, Director of Pupil Personnel Services; Joanne Blier, Business Administrator; Liz Buxton, Food Services Director; Michael Buoniconti, Superintendent; Bill Knittle, Rowe Principal; Paul McLatchy III, Minutes Taker
Audience of Citizens: Noel Abbott, Jodi Brown, Janet Cowie, Cindy Laffond, Lenny Laffond, Kerri McLatchy, Ellen Miller, Julie Seaver, Jennifer Morse Sprague, Mary Paige, Maggie Parent, Patricia Tierney, Marilyn Wilson, Alice Wozniak

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order by Chair Loomis at 6:15 P.M.

Audience of Citizens: Chair Loomis turned to the audience to see if anybody had any questions or comments for the Committee. The audience members had none.

Minutes: The following meeting minutes were addressed:

- January 10th: Chair Loomis informed the audience and school leadership that he had put three resumes for the position of school secretary in the packet for that meeting. He later discovered that all resumes **but** the selected person's are confidential. Chair Loomis directed Mr. McLatchy to make sure that they are kept confidential and not distributed. Mr. McLatchy will do so. ~~Our 1/10/12 packets included the resumes. It hink that is all you have to state. All the other dates referenced I probably was screwed up with. 12/12/11 has nothing to do with nothing.~~
- October 11th: Chair Loomis had sent his comments on the minutes to Ms. Danek Burke. She incorporated them into the minutes, but left them as Chair Loomis had sent them, not wanting to change them without discussion. She also was unsure of one section, which seemed to be a direct quote by Noel Abbott at the last meeting. As there were spelling mistakes and at times confusing, Ms. Danek Burke asked Chair Loomis to re-read and re-write that section to make it more clear. Chair Loomis will speak with Mr. Abbott and make it clearer for the next meeting. Ms. Danek Burke also requested that it be made clear that a non-highlighted sentence saying "Supt. Buoniconti did not disagree" should have been highlighted, as it was Chair Loomis' comment, and not in the original minutes. The minutes of October 11th were tabled.
- November 8th: Chair Loomis will review the tapes from that meeting to review the Chairman's Report section for the next meeting. The minutes of November 8th were tabled.
- December 20th: After a brief discussion and several changes, Ms. Miller motioned to accept the minutes as corrected. Ms. Danek Burke seconded the motion. The vote was 3-0 in favor. Mr. McLatchy will make the changes in the document and have a copy available at the school tomorrow for signing. After this, he will need to have the Town Clerk stamp it with the town seal, and this must be given to Ms. Blier to attach to the Massachusetts School Building Authority Statement of Interest.

Ms. Morse Sprague asked if the minutes could be posted on the school website, to enhance access to information. Superintendent Buoniconti said that there is no problem getting them on-line. Ms. Danek Burke made a motion that the School Committee post the approved minutes on the school website. Ms. Miller seconded the motion, and the vote was 3-0. Mr. McLatchy will work with Judy Willis to have them uploaded.

Special Attorney & Consultant: Chair Loomis turned a report on this subject over to Selectboard Chair Noel Abbott. Mr. Abbott reported that due to the changes in the draft three-district agreement initiated by the Mohawk School District, there was a need for legal representation to ensure that the town understands the legal obligations with the proposed changes. He also referenced an item on the MTRSD meeting agenda for January 11th (Section 8, Item C) that states, "Town of Rowe Special Town meeting to allocate funding for litigation against Mohawk" with a reference to the official meeting results beneath it. Mr. Abbott disagreed with the wording on the agenda, as Rowe has not considered any litigation against Mohawk at this time. The funds are to be used for legal guidance and consulting at this time.

Ms. Danek Burke said that Mr. Abbott had made statements at the special town meeting on December 21st and at the December School Committee meeting saying that we needed an attorney because he felt that the regional agreement was not being followed. This is not a result of actions taken by the Mohawk District in the past few months. She said she found it confusing because these items never came before the School Committee and were only discussed through the Chair. The comments made at the town meeting appear to be contradictory to what he was saying now. Ms. Danek Burke said that the funds were allocated to look into the issues of what Mohawk has supposedly done.

Mr. Abbott agreed that the funds were approved for that purpose. However, he is still concerned that the agenda includes a reference to litigation, which has not been considered. He feels some may look at the agenda and draw the conclusion that Rowe is preparing for litigation. To Mr. Abbott, litigation should always be the last option, as "everyone loses under those conditions".

In regards to the communications between Mr. Abbott and Chair Loomis, Mr. Abbott said that the topic had been discussed at last month's School Committee meeting. In that meeting, he had provided a timeline of the events, which had happened quickly. He stated that he had not met with Chair Loomis on that issue prior to December 2nd. At the School Committee meeting in November these issues did not exist. Because of the timeline and issues with the Mohawk District, the Selectboard chose to move forward on securing legal counsel. As the agreement affects the school, and by its budget, the town, he feels that it is no longer solely a School Committee issue.

Ms. Danek Burke feels that issues like this are what the School Committee is for, and that by taking action without the involvement of the School Committee, Mr. Abbott is "going around this Committee by working with the chair off-line, and just bringing things to this committee after the fact". Mr. Abbott disagreed.

When asked to explain what the attorney and consultant were for, Mr. Abbott said he was not prepared to discuss that at this meeting. Ms. Danek Burke felt it was odd that the Selectboard asked the town for money, but were not prepared to discuss what they were for.

Ms. Danek Burke asked Mr. Abbott to further explain what the funds were supposed to be used for. Mr. Abbott replied that the Mohawk School District Committee has hired its own counsel to review the draft agreements and has received legal opinions. The District Committee has signed both a draft three district agreement, and a two district agreement (between the Hawlemont District and the Mohawk District). Mr. Abbott said that there was a change in the formula that affects Rowe, resulting in an increase in cost for services. As such, the town may be liable for a far greater output.

He feels the town needs their own attorney and consultant. Additionally, it affects both the School Committee and Board of Selectmen, so the Selectmen found it "necessary and vital" to

find counsel and guidance. After Ms. Danek Burke asked whether the Board will work with the whole School Committee or just the Chair, Mr. Abbott said that it was "obvious" that the Board needs to work with the whole Committee.

Ms. Danek Burke asked if any of the \$25,000 has been spent on legal counsel or consulting. Mr. Abbott replied that it had. She asked how is it considered working together if the School Committee is not being consulted. Mr. Abbott replied that the meeting was where cooperation would happen, but Ms. Danek Burke felt that no information prior to meetings makes it difficult and limits participation of the School Committee members. At the last meeting, Mr. Abbott said that he would keep the School Committee informed of meetings involving the use of either the consultant or attorneys. This should be done via joint meeting according to both Mr. Abbott and Ms. Danek Burke.

Ms. Miller asked if more than one School Committee member shows up, would they have to post a meeting. Alice Wozniak said that yes, if more than one member shows up, it would be a breach of open meeting laws if no meeting is posted. In order to post a meeting, she said they would need to know in advance to follow legal requirements. Chair Loomis said he had made a promise to Ms. Danek Burke at the last meeting to keep the Committee informed.

He did note that meetings with Mr. Abbott and the attorney are not breaches of open meeting laws, as there is no more than one person from each board participating. He said his feelings on the subject were well known, and that he has brought up the subject of the tuition and transportation costs on multiple occasions. Back when the original agreement was drafted, and subsequently amended, the School Committee always had legal counsel. As the current draft agreement was created without input from Rowe, Chair Loomis said that the legal counsel is being used to "protect our interests", and noted that the other two districts did the same before approving the draft agreements. He thinks Rowe is very fortunate and should pay their fair share, but wants to be certain that Rowe is represented in the process and decision making.

Ms. Morse Sprague asked what the deadline was for finalizing the agreement, as the budget season is beginning. Chair Loomis said that the current agreement has no end date, and that the School Committee directed the Central Office to use the current agreement's numbers for next year.

Kerri McLatchy asked if the School Committee has to vote on the draft three district shared agreement at all. Chair Loomis said in the past, they have, and then the chairperson has signed the document. Superintendent Buoniconti answered Ms. McLatchy's question with a definitive "yes". As a taxpayer and voter, Ms. McLatchy said she feels that the School Committee should have the most information possible when making a decision on the agreement.

Ms. Danek Burke responded that the issue had been discussed in the past. At the November meeting, it was agreed that neither Russell Dupere nor town counsel Kopelmann & Paige could be used as they represent other districts and towns, respectively. At the December meeting, it was agreed (but not voted) that they would need an attorney to review the draft agreement. She also referenced a motion she made at the December meeting to approve the agreement pending legal review, but this was defeated as there was no second. In addition, she voted against tabling the matter at that meeting, but the motion to table passed 2-1.

Chair Loomis said that pending legal review, he doesn't understand why the current agreement cannot be used.

Ms. Morse Sprague said that as a taxpayer and voter, she feels all interactions should be public and open so that residents can provide opinions. Chair Loomis said no one is attempting to hide anything, but in order to move forward, it's likely most meetings would be held in executive

session. Ms. Danek Burke disagreed, saying it couldn't be done as there is no existing legal action being taken. An article on a similar situation early in 2011 was written in The Recorder, and the minutes of that executive session were eventually released. Mr. Abbott said that the Board of Selectmen will likely seek counsel on the legality of executive session.

Ms. Danek Burke again asked that if the School Committee is not included, how can they be involved? Mr. Abbott answered that it could arguably be considered solely a Board of Selectmen matter. She asked that in the future, the School Committee be invited to all meetings pertaining to this matter so that they may legally post a meeting. There is a perception that some (or all) of this work is being done behind closed doors, while the Selectboard is promoting openness and clarity.

She asked Mr. Abbott what the money expended thus far has been used for. Mr. Abbott explained that some of it was for a retainer, and some was for legal hours (though the town has not yet been billed). When asked, he informed the School Committee that David Newell had been appointed as the town's consultant, and that Naomi Stoneburg and Lenny Kesten (both partners in the same firm) serve as the attorneys.

Mr. Abbott said that currently, the chairs of the two boards are just working on getting information, and that when an item involves the School Committee comes up, they will be invited. Ms. Danek Burke finds it troubling that it sounds like the Selectboard doesn't want to involve the School Committee during meetings with either the attorneys or consultant.

Chair Loomis said that right now, the primary focus is just to gather the data and understand it. Once the information is compiled into reports, it'll be distributed to the public. However, he said that during the data gathering period, the whole committee doesn't need to be involved. Ms. Danek Burke said that Chair Loomis is not letting them. She also asked if Chair Loomis felt that interacting with the School Committee wasn't important. He said that interviews may be done with members if it's felt it will provide solid information.

Ms. Miller noted that due to scheduling, she is normally unable to attend to Selectboard meetings. She did say that it is not difficult to post a meeting, and that if need be, Chair Loomis and Ms. Danek Burke can sort out before a meeting to determine if a posting is needed. Ms. Wozniak later commented that she agreed. She felt it would be better to have a meeting posted and not need it than not have a meeting posted and possibly violate open meeting laws.

Mr. Abbott asked Ms. Danek Burke to submit through him any legal questions she might have for the attorney. Her response was that she felt she shouldn't have to go through the Selectboard, but that she should be able to contact the attorneys themselves. Mr. Abbott said that unless a legal violation is occurring, the Selectboard will likely continue with its current practice to "protect this town and obtain information".

Ms. Paige asked that unless there are problems or legal reasons to prevent residents from being present when an attorney meets with a board, residents should be allowed. As a town resident, her view is that the attorney should be an outside source to look at everything neutrally. She felt that before, maybe the School Committee wasn't working in the best interest of the town, but with an attorney, it can help the School Committee to make the best decisions possible.

Jodi Brown asked why the two boards could not just have a joint meeting. Janet Cowie said that there should be some joint meetings to move forward, maybe in executive session, but agree that they need to accept the issue at hand. Simply put, she feels the two boards just need to work together.

Ending Time & Next Meeting: Chair Loomis suggested that the meeting be adjourned by about 9:00, and that they meet next week to cover the other items on the agenda. After a brief discussion, it was decided to post a meeting for Thursday the 19th at 6:00 P.M. Ms. Miller will find out for sure if this date and time works for her.

Three District Agreement: Ms. Miller asked if Chair Loomis had received any answers to the questions he sent to the Hawlemont and Mohawk Districts since the last meeting. Chair Loomis replied he had not.

Electronic Recorder: Principal Knittle is working on purchasing a digital recorder.

School Pay Phone: Principal Knittle said he had sent an e-mail to a number of people asking them how they felt about removing the pay phone outside the school. He said the response was about 50/50. Many felt there should be some method of communication, since cell phone coverage is non-existent. This phone is paid for by the town budget, not the school budget. Mr. Abbott commented that the phone would not be "yanked" until another option is found.

REAP Grant Contact: At the last meeting, the School Committee voted (2-1) to appoint Principal Knittle as the primary contact for the REAP Grant. As Principal Knittle had not received any update about that, Chair Loomis asked Superintendent Buoniconti if there had been any issues.

Superintendent Buoniconti said that the School Committee had tasked the Principal twice at the last meeting (one being the REAP contact, and the phone issue as the other). He asked if Chair Loomis knew the roles and responsibilities of the School Committee, Superintendent, and Principal, which he replied with "I think so". The Superintendent said that the Principal does not report to the School Committee. As the supervisor of the Principal, he does not feel comfortable tasking him with responsibilities that take away his time from his educational responsibilities.

Ms. Danek Burke said she felt that the School Committee vote was illegal (Ms. Danek Burke dissented in that vote), as the School Committee does not have the authority to task individual staff members, according to the law.

Chair Loomis responded to her with "whatever". When questioned, he said the he meant they would just move on, but Ms. Cowie commented that she felt there was a tone of disrespect in that statement, and that as the Chair, he should be respect everyone in the room, as everyone else should, too. Chair Loomis agreed and apologized.

Ms. Miller felt that the REAP issue was a policy issue and in the realm of the School Committee's authority. Ms. Danek Burke said there was no policy. Jumping ahead, Ms. Miller said she had completed the work on the concussion policy but had forgotten it at home. She will bring it to the next meeting.

Citizen Comment: Cindy Laffond asked to be recognized and said to all persons seated at the tables, "This is a public meeting, and I have spoken with the ethics commission, and **anything** said at that table is to be heard by the public. And I have watched this meeting after meeting after meeting... little snits back there, and if you have something to say, say it to the public, that's why we're here. Thank you."

School Committee Secretary: Chair Loomis said that the Committee had resumes of interested persons. He has drafted a job description for the School Committee Secretary (attached), which he distributed to others. He felt that it would be hard to fill the position, as the salary has a range of \$600-\$1,800, and that perhaps they shouldn't interview until the monies have been approved. Ms. Danek Burke said that since the School Committee is in the FY12 budget, any money above the budgeted \$600 would have to be transferred from somewhere else.

Ms. Danek Burke asked if the description was produced from a joint meeting with Superintendent Buoniconti and Judy Willis (as Chair Loomis had previously said would occur), to which he said no. Ms. Danek Burke's main focus was how the Rowe Secretary would coordinate with Judy Willis, who assembles the packets and serves as the executive secretary to the Superintendent. She was wondering what duties Ms. Willis will still assist in once a permanent secretary is hired. Superintendent Buoniconti said a discussion needs to happen with Ms. Willis to determine what she should be handling and what should be given to the Rowe Secretary. Chair Loomis will try to meet with the two soon to have that discussion.

Handouts: Chair Loomis distributed handouts that related to his report (attached).

Superintendent Evaluation: Chair Loomis apologized for "dragging [his] feet". Ms. Danek Burke had requested that the Superintendent's evaluation be added to the agenda under "unfinished business". When asked to address the topic, Ms. Danek Burke said normally the evaluations are complete and compiled. As Chair Loomis set a deadline originally of October 31st, the compilation should be done.

Chair Loomis said that he was concerned about the date. The form said July 1, 2010-June 30, 2011. He said that they had been on a cycle from September 1, 2010-August 31, 2011. He supports changing to the dates on the form, as it corresponds with the fiscal year, contracts, and elections. However, as no formal decision was made, as far as he is concerned, the original dates of September to August are valid for this current year. He said he hopes that the other members did it by those dates.

Ms. Danek Burke said that she did it by the dates on the form. After Chair Loomis had originally suggested that the dates be changed, Mohawk and Hawlemont changed their dates. She felt that the time to comment was back in September when they received the forms.

Chair Loomis said that he does not recall formally changing the dates, and neither did Ms. Miller. Superintendent Buoniconti said that the other districts changed their dates because of the discussion at that meeting. His evaluation has been completed by Mohawk and is in the process of being completed by Hawlemont.

Chair Loomis read excerpts from several e-mails (attached):

Dated December 19, 2012 from Bill Loomis to Michael Buoniconti

Michael: I was digging through your e-mails and came across this one:

In our Aug. meeting I made a motion to change the future superintendent evaluation dates to July 1 through June 30. This motion was withdrawn per your input that all districts should change the date in unison. I believe I emailed the other chairs to discuss this issue. Please show me in school committee minutes that the districts changed the 2010-2011 evaluation date to July 1, 2010 to June 30, 2011. I see all the 2010-2011 evaluation forms show these dates which feel is correct.

Dated December 19, 2012 from Judy Willis to Bill Loomis

Dear Mr. Loomis:

The October 12, 2011 Mohawk School Committee minutes reflect the Mohawk Personnel Subcommittee presentation of the 2010-2011 Superintendent's Evaluation form to the School Committee by Personnel Subcommittee Member Jon Wyman. In the absence of the Personnel Subcommittee Chair Susan Flaccus.

Jon Wyman distributed packets of information for the Superintendent's Evaluation for July 1, 2010 through June 30, 2011. Mr. Wyman read the cover letter written by Susan Flaccus on behalf of the Personnel Subcommittee.

The evaluation templates were completed and submitted by the 15 voting members of the Mohawk School Committee and the evaluation compilation was accepted at the December 14, 2011, Mohawk School Committee meeting using the time period July 1, 2010 through June 30, 2011.

The October 18, 2011, Hawlemont School Committee minutes indicate the template was distributed for completion by committee members. While no dates are listed in the minutes, July 1, 2010 - June 30, 2011 are the dates noted on the evaluation template that was distributed. This evaluation is still in progress, anticipated to be completed in December and the compilation accepted in January.

Chair Loomis doesn't see where it said that the other districts had changed their dates. He had meant for the *future* evaluation periods the dates should be changed, but not the current period. He will ask the MTRSD tomorrow evening to see whether there was an official vote. He stated again that as far as he is concerned, the period for the Rowe School Committee is from September 1, 2010 to August 31, 2011. He made a motion that the evaluations for 2010-2011 for the Superintendent be from September 1, 2010 to August 31, 2011. Ms. Miller seconded the motion.

Ms. Danek Burke said that everyone on all the committees (except for Chair Loomis) had completed the evaluations for the months on the form. Additionally, any months not included on the evaluation will be on the next evaluation, so will eventually be included. She asked Chair Loomis what the problem is with the time frame. Ms. Miller had used the dates Chair Loomis did and wondered where and when the vote was held to use the new dates.

Ms. Danek Burke felt that now the evaluations are done, no changes should be made. She said that the discussion should've been held when they received the forms months ago. As all three district committees had completed the evaluations, they shouldn't vote to change the period.

Chair Loomis explained that his motion was to keep it between September 2010 and August 2011. He spoke to the audience and said that as Lisa Miller and himself had come onto the committee later (Chair Loomis in January 2011 and Ms. Miller in May 2011), their evaluations should be weighted less than Ms. Danek Burke's, who had been on the School Committee much longer. By using the ~~September-August~~ July-June dates, their evaluation weight would be reduced by two months, to give a stronger voice to Ms. Danek Burke's evaluation. After this, he withdrew his motion.

Ms. Cowie asked what would happen with the months before the current members were on. The answer was that the months can be split (so one person might have two, leave the Committee, and the successor might have ten) to provide a full twelve months of evaluation for each seat.

Ms. Danek Burke asked how the evaluations could be weighted if the times are different. Chair Loomis said he would send her a new evaluation form, but she responded that she had already done her evaluation, invested the time, and used the listed dates between July and June. Chair Loomis said that he would get in touch with Ms. Willis and instruct her to use the September-August dates.

Ms. Wozniak said she felt that it makes sense to have the evaluation match the Fiscal Year, which begins July 1st and ends June 30th. Chair Loomis feels that as contracts and elections occur at the same time, it makes more sense.

MSBA Statement of Interest: Mr. McLatchy will work with Ms. Blier to provide the necessary documents to the MSBA. Chair Loomis thanked Ms. Blier for her work on the issue.

Two Meetings: Chair Loomis said that he would like to consider having two meetings a month, to shorten the time of each normal meeting, but suggested it be considered at another meeting.

MTRSD Meeting Packet: Chair Loomis explained that before the last meeting, he quickly went through the MTRSD meeting packet and pulled out items pertaining to Rowe.

He commented that Ms. Danek Burke had requested the full packet for this meeting. She said that this was due to the items presented by Chair Loomis at the last meeting were handed out at the meeting and not in advance, members were not able to review them in advance. Chair Loomis said he had gone through and pulled out documents related to the reports of the Superintendent and Business Administrator which were not originally included in the handouts.

Ms. Danek Burke said that in the current MTRSD packet, there was a letter from a citizen concerning a "disturbing phone call" from Chair Loomis. Ms. Danek Burke said she would like to discuss this at a future meeting.

In regards to requesting the packet, Ms. Danek Burke wanted to make sure that they had the chance to review the packet, as well as ensure they had a complete packet. When asked, Chair Loomis said he did not have a problem with members requesting them, as they are very informative and important.

Goal Post Article: Ms. Danek Burke requested the item be addressed at the last meeting, but it was not, so she requested it be addressed at this meeting. She wished to discuss both the December and January articles written by Chair Loomis. She said that there were a number of instances where the Chair is expressing his views as the view of the Committee, and that he is providing misinformation to public and distorting the record. She feels that it is a dereliction of his duty as a committee member, and that there are many examples where he has misrepresented the committee. She asked if he planned to continue writing similar articles.

Chair Loomis said that if anyone wanted to contribute an article, which he has asked if other members want to do in the past, they are more than welcome to, and he would step back. He asked Mr. McLatchy, who is also the Editor of the Goal Post, if Ms. Danek Burke could submit a "rebuttal" of the articles he wrote. Mr. McLatchy said she could submit whatever she wanted.

Chair Loomis said that he will only express his views as Chair, and not as the views of the whole committee. Ms. Danek Burke said he often used the word "we" in the articles and could be perceived as an opinion or position of the committee. Chair Loomis apologized and will try to not do that in the future. He will try to make sure readers understand that the article is written only by the chair, not the committee.

Ms. Danek Burke again said that Chair Loomis had made several statements that she felt was distorting the record. Chair Loomis disagreed, saying what he wrote he believed to be factual, but encouraged Ms. Danek Burke to write a response for the next issue. He said that the Goal Post had been "bugging" him for reports and he wanted to make sure a report was given. Again he offered to have another member write it.

Ms. Danek Burke said that if she were to write an article, she would want the whole committee to look at it, and that there is plenty of information that can be reported from their meetings. Ms. Miller said that it appeared that the article is written by the chair, not the whole committee, and doesn't feel that he did anything wrong.

Ms. Danek Burke asked if the committee wanted to go over the items she found in the article at either this meeting or the next. Chair Loomis said that he would like to go over the article, and will have it added to the agenda. Mr. Abbott said that it was Ms. Danek Burke's right to write a rebuttal (and suggested she do so), but felt that at this point, there were more important issues to discuss at this point. Chair Loomis agreed to have it added to the agenda, but Ms. Miller asked that it be added to the February meeting's agenda, not the meeting next week. Chair Loomis agreed.

Staff Involvement Policy: Chair Loomis included a policy in his handouts. This has been adopted by Mohawk, and felt it may be a good addition to Rowe. He made a motion to have the Policy Sub-Committee review the policy and see whether it would be appropriate for the Elementary School. The vote was 3-0.

Concussion Policy: Ms. Miller said that she will bring the draft concussion policy to the next meeting, and Chair Loomis agreed, but asked her to bring it to the February meeting. Ms. Danek Burke said that she believed the law states that the school needs to have an interim policy in the meantime. Given that an interim policy could be very simple and short, she asked if it could be brought to the next meeting so that they can approve it soon.

Ms. Miller said that she needed to speak with Superintendent Buoniconti due to the draft policy including the 6th Grade in the Middle School and doesn't really address the Elementary School, so was confused how this would be addressed. She believes that the nurse has a concussion policy, and perhaps this could be used. Because the state doesn't normally include the 6th Grade in Elementary Schools, she didn't know how to proceed. She asked if Superintendent Buoniconti had sent anything to DESE, to which he answered no. He said that the state isn't policing this matter closely, and that the school nurse may have an adequate policy. Ms. Miller will work with Superintendent Buoniconti to figure out what needs to be done.

Retainer Agreement: The School Committee was presented with an agreement from Attorney Dupere informing them that his retainer will be \$275 a month for FY13, which is a \$25/month increase. Chair Loomis made a motion to accept the retainer at \$275/month for FY13. Ms. Danek Burke seconded the motion. During discussion, Ms. Miller said that her understanding was that the retainer had been \$250/month for a while, which Ms. Blier responded that it had been for about two years. Ms. Danek Burke said it was at one point \$200, so there have been increases over the years. **The vote was 3-0 in favor.**

Report of the Superintendent:

Handout: Superintendent Buoniconti had several handouts passed out to the members.

District Improvement Plan: There is currently a District Improvement Plan and a School Improvement Plan. He suggested that the two plans be worked on to align better. Currently, there are ten broad strategies listed under five goals, and three of them overlap or are similar. All of the following goals and strategies are listed from the District Improvement Plan, which is also attached.

Goal 1- "All students will be educated in safe environments that promote learning"

The first strategy (Improve and practice emergency procedures) was an example of what Superintendent Buoniconti felt might be better suited in the School Improvement Plan. He said that not much research had been conducted on strategies two and three.

Superintendent Buoniconti said that Rowe does not currently have a wellness policy, which often covers physical fitness and food services. Mohawk has a wellness policy, and the Nurse Leader is working on reworking one for the Mohawk District. He suggested that Rowe participate in this process. Ms. Danek Burke asked if the state required it. Superintendent Buoniconti said he doesn't have the history, but that it was fairly new when he began.

He asked if Rowe would like to have a wellness policy, and Chair Loomis said that without further information, he agreed. Ms. Danek Burke agreed. Ms. Danek Burke made a motion that the Rowe School Committee work in conjunction with the other two districts towards developing a wellness policy. Chair Loomis seconded the motion. The vote was 3-0 in favor.

Superintendent Buoniconti said he will work with Principal Knittle to get someone from Rowe involved. It is recommended that the nurse be involved, especially as it's a working committee. Ms. Miller will try to attend when possible.

Food Services: *(While this was addressed because it is also part of the District Improvement Plan, this was part of a broader issue and therefore listed as its own section under the Superintendent's Report).* Liz Buxton, Director of Food Services at the Mohawk Central Office, attended this meeting. At last month's meeting, Ms. Miller had several questions regarding the food services at Rowe, and it was agreed to have Ms. Buxton come to the meeting.

Ms. Buxton has done some analysis of the breakfast and lunch programs. She said that participation in the breakfast program has decreased by approximately 14%. The children are eating, but they're not taking enough food to be reimbursed, apparently. The state had an audit conducted in September and they informed Ms. Buxton of what was and was not reimbursable. Several of the breakfasts that had been included to date were not in fact reimbursable. Ms. Buxton and Carol Lively (Cafeteria Manager at Rowe) will be attending a training session on what counts as a reimbursable breakfast. Ms. Danek Burke asked for a brief explanation of what constitutes a reimbursable breakfast by the state. Ms. Buxton said that the state requires a meat (or alternative), bread, milk, or juice. The school needs to use three of the four, so cereal and milk would not count. Ms. Miller asked if fruit could be substituted for juice, and Ms. Buxton answered yes.

Ms. Paige asked if more education would help. Ms. Buxton replied that school breakfast week is coming up, and that they will be working on educating the students about healthier eating habits.

Ms. Buxton said that there had been a 4% decrease in lunch participation, but she was not worried about this, as there had been an increase in the number of students. Plus, she had heard that the students in the sixth grade class that graduated were "big eaters" and that the kindergarten class was not, showing that the eating habits of the students could change from year to year.

Ms. Buxton, Ms. Lively, and Principal Knittle met and reviewed the surveys that went out several months ago. One common remark was that the bread was not popular, and Ms. Buxton said that she, too, was not impressed by the bread. She worked with a bread company to switch to a better bread, which is 100% whole wheat and has no high-fructose corn syrup. She is also test-running a program at the Mohawk Cafeteria to have them bake a frozen dough, so the bread is fresher. Mr. Abbott suggested that maybe it would be useful to have a local bakery produce the dough and have it delivered. Ms. Buxton liked the idea, but noted that there would be a cost involved, and that the current flour was government-provided and very low cost. One of the bigger issues is the amount of free time Ms. Lively has, as she is very busy and may not have time to bake bread every day.

Ms. Miller asked if the committee could get the ~~numbers and~~ percentages from the last ~~two~~ years to compare before the changes have taken place, as well as a list of where all the food has been bought. She provided background that up until these last two years, her children ate the school lunch. Now she makes lunch almost every day, and when added up, totaled over 30 hours a year. For her, this is a large issue (not just because of the time involved, but for a number of other issues).

Ms. McLatchy asked if anything with the grinder rolls, hot dog, and hamburger rolls would change with the new bread. Ms. Buxton said that grinder rolls are a part of the new program at Mohawk, and that she was not pleased with the hot dog and hamburger rolls. Ms. Miller said that since hot dogs (for example) are not the healthiest, perhaps the choice of bread isn't too important and that the cafeteria should go "all the way" towards making it an enjoyable meal.

Ms. Miller asked if Ms. Buxton could provide a regular report. Superintendent Buoniconti asked if she would like it sent to the whole committee or just her. Ms. Miller said that she was fine receiving a quarterly report in the packet, so all committee members could review it and that it could be entered into the minutes.

District Improvement Plan (Continued):

Goal 2- "All students will be provided diverse learning opportunities"

The first strategy (increase content area integration) was discussed as being fairly successful with a colonial fair. This year, they are discussing the possibility of doing an all-system field day, which would be on top of each school's regular field day. The art teachers will also discuss the possibility of an all-system art fair.

The second strategy (increase differentiated instruction) was passed over, with Superintendent Buoniconti simply asking the members to just read the information. Highlights include migrating from the Reading Recovery to the Leveled Literacy Intervention programs, which increases the grade levels and number of students involved. Superintendent Buoniconti said that the math program at the school, which has math all at the same time, lends itself to allowing grouping based on skill versus grade levels. Superintendent Buoniconti asked Principal Knittle if perhaps the same thing could be done with ELA.

The third strategy (strengthen school culture conducive to learning) was discussed. The Second Step program has been in the building, and the Steps to Respect program was adopted. The kickoff training for Steps to Respect was supposed to occur at the beginning of the year, but as Tropical Storm Irene delayed school by three days, it has yet to be rescheduled. Superintendent Buoniconti believes it will not be held until the beginning of next year. The District bullying prevention and intervention plan has to be updated yearly. Ms. Danek Burke asked if Rowe's had been approved by DESE, which it was in April of 2011.

Goal 3- "All students will be taught by highly qualified and inspiring staff"

The only strategy (increase differentiated professional development that supports the school mission) focuses on teachers in the school. Superintendent Buoniconti asked Principal Knittle to explain the matter further.

Principal Knittle said that Sandy Roth had been brought in to have a professional development day with the staff. Each classroom was given a certain amount of time with Mr. Roth to work on subjects that the teachers chose that related to areas they wanted to work on. They had the option to use this person to observe and give suggestions, or spend time with him. At the end of the day, they gathered together to reflect on the day's events. Principal Knittle said he had heard a lot of positive feedback. Patricia Tierney said that it was very helpful and effective as it addressed specific and individual needs, rather than a broad approach.

Additionally, Lucy Calkins from the Western MA writing program will help the school take the writing program and expand it for all grade levels. The school will have someone coming from the Western MA Writing Project, and will work similarly to the professional development day with Mr. Roth. This will help to see how kids are transitioning and how to help them progress.

Goal 4: "All students will reach high standards across the curriculum"

The first strategy (develop and implement standards-based report card) suggests updating the report cards be updated to be in alignment with the state's 2011 curriculum frameworks. Ruth Manna, Director of Curriculum & Assessments, has been in touch with her counterparts in other school district. They don't feel it makes sense for all districts (not just Mohawk, Hawlemont, and Rowe, but all of Franklin County) to "reinvent the wheel", and they will work together to address this. They feel that since the frameworks are relatively new, it will not be used this year, to allow teachers to learn the new system. Ms. Miller asked how often this will have to be changed, and Superintendent Buoniconti said that he does not feel it will be a frequent thing.

The second strategy (review & map ELA curriculum, instruction, and assessment) will be a focus of the administrative council to work on a five-year plan to "keep things fresh". He said he would like to see it happen between now and the end of the summer, so it could be used for the next school year. It will need to involve the teaching staff as well.

Ms. Miller asked if the review involved changing anything or if they were just reviewing it. Superintendent Buoniconti said they would review everything and develop a five-year cycle.

Goal 5: "The District will foster a culture of community building"

Superintendent Buoniconti said that this item also appears on the School Improvement Plan. He asked Principal Knittle to provide more information as to what has occurred to date. The strategy for this goal is to "increase inter-school activities for fifth and sixth graders".

Principal Knittle said that the Colonial Day had already occurred and was successful, and that talks for a system-wide field day were in progress. Dwight Beebe (the 5th/6th Grade teacher) and Principal Knittle will be meeting with the principal from Heath to see if there may be any possibility in sharing transportation to Nature's Classroom, a biennial trip taken by those two grades. They will also be talking with Amy Looman, the principal at Colrain, as they will be going to Washington D.C. around the same time Rowe students will.

He said he had heard from Leanne Loomis, who is both a Rowe School parent and a guidance counselor at Mohawk, who said that sometimes Rowe students have to go through some adjustments, and that doing these activities might help. Ms. Miller said that Principal Knittle might want to get some perspective from the parents, as there may have been concerns from parents about certain issues, like different policies for each group (an example was cell phone usage). Principal Knittle agreed, saying that there would be one bus but two groups could end up being slightly problematic. Mr. McLatchy said that as a former student that had difficulties adjusting to Mohawk, he supports the efforts to have more inter-school activities.

Superintendent Buoniconti said that he feels this item belongs in the School Improvement Plan. He had nothing further to bring to the Committee about the meeting.

Ms. Miller asked a question about the Washington trip regarding the hotel they would be staying in. She said in the past the School Committee had invested some extra money to place the students in the city and not have to rely on the bus as much, providing more time for activities. Principal Knittle will find out.

Ms. Wozniak asked Superintendent Buoniconti about the Colonial Day event, and whether it would be changed with the five-year plan, otherwise they would end up doing the same thing every year. However, only the fifth graders participate at this point, so the question is moot. However, Principal Knittle said it was an interesting suggestion, and that perhaps the sixth graders may be included and have the program altered to provide something different every other year.

School of Choice: Superintendent Buoniconti shared an e-mail from Michael Gilbert from the Massachusetts Association of School Committees regarding school of choice. The e-mail says that if the School Committee votes to be a school of choice, they have to hold a public hearing every year. However, unless a school votes *not* to be a school of choice, they are automatically considered a school of choice anyway, and don't require a public hearing. The number of seats allotted for school of choice students is a separate process decided by the School Committee.

Chair Loomis said the School Committee should probably make a motion to that effect, and looked to Ms. Danek Burke. She replied that she didn't want to create more of an issue by voting *not* to vote, but had no objection if the School Committee wanted to. Chair Loomis said that a vote could be referenced in future years, but Ms. Danek Burke said that there is a

document stating this, so it will be included in the records. It was decided that if there was a problem, they could vote at a later date.

Principal's Report/Remaining Items: Chair Loomis asked if the Central Office staff wanted to have this discussed now, as they have a longer drive home. Superintendent Buoniconti said it wasn't as much the drive, but the fact that many of them wake up early for work, and respectfully suggested that the Central Office staff be done by 9:00. Ms. Danek Burke asked for clarification on the remaining items. Chair Loomis said that those items will be addressed at the next meeting on the 19th. He also asked if there was anything else that was important to address at the next meeting. Ms. Danek Burke felt that the remaining items need to be addressed at either the meeting on the 19th or the February meeting, as many items have been on there for a while.

Budget Issues: Ms. Miller asked for a budget vs. actual for each line item in the FY11 budget, as the amount budgeted is not necessarily spent. She also asked for a b.v.a to date for FY12. In regards to the FY13 budget, she said that the budget should read "leveled services" and not "status quo".

Audience of Citizens: Ms. Morse Sprague suggested that at future meetings, Mr. McLatchy not be placed between Ms. Miller and Ms. Danek Burke, as this gives a perception of division. Chair Loomis said this was only to ensure he received a copy of each handout, but he could still do this by sitting on the end.

Adjourn: Chair Loomis motioned to adjourn, and was seconded by Ms. Miller. The vote was 3-0 in favor. The meeting was closed at 9:39 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,
Paul McLatchy III

Approved on: _____

Bill Loomis, *Chair*

Lisa Miller, *Vice-Chair*

Lisa Danek Burke-Burke, *Secretary*

Attached Documents:

- Agenda
- Draft Minutes- October 11, 2011
- Draft Minutes- November 8, 2011
- Draft Minutes- December 20, 2011
- December 16, 2011 Letter from Russell J. Dupere to Superintendent Buoniconti
- Retainer Agreement Between Rowe School and Dupere Law Offices
- Superintendent's Report
- January 28, 2011 E-mail, Michael Gilbert to Judy Willis, "School Choice Question"
- Budget Summary FY13
- FY13 Proposed Status Quo Budget

- FY13 Projected Enrollment
- FY13 Field Trips
- Capital Plan
- Capital Plan Request
- Principal's Report
- MTRSD December 14, 2011 Meeting Packet
- December 20, 2011 E-mail, Ellen Miller to Bill Loomis, "Sun Trust Lease Payments for FY2013"
- December 22, 2011 E-mail, Bill Loomis to Joanne Blier, No Subject
- December 28, 2011 E-mail, William Knittle to Families Rowe, etc., "Pay Phone at Rowe School"
- December 28, 2011 E-mail, Lisa Miller to Bill Loomis, "Cafeteria"
- December 30, 2011 E-mail, William Knittle to Bill Loomis, "School Committee Minutes"
- December 30, 2011 E-mail, Superintendent Michael Buoniconti to Lisa Miller, "Head Injury Policy"
- December 22, 2011 E-mail, Bill Loomis to Bob Aeschback, "Draft 3-District Agreement"
- December 22, 2011 E-mail, Bill Loomis to Lisa Danek Burke, No Subject
- December 30, 2011 E-mail, Bill Loomis to Joanne Blier, "Selectboard vote on MSBA?"
- December 30, 2011 E-mail, William Knittle to Bill Loomis, "School Committee Minutes"
- December 30, 2011 E-mail, Bill Loomis to Michael Buoniconti, "School Committee Minutes"
- January 3, 2012 E-mail, from Bill Loomis to Judy Willis, "Proposed 1/10/12 Rowe School Committee meeting agenda"
- January 4, 2012 E-mail, from Lisa Danek Burke to Bill Loomis, "Proposed 1/10/12 Rowe School Committee Meeting Agenda"
- January 3, 2012 E-mail, from Judy Willis to Bill Loomis, "Proposed 1/10/12 Rowe School Committee Meeting Agenda"
- December 30, 2011 E-mail, from Bill Loomis to Michael Buoniconti, "School Committee Minutes"
- January 9, 2011 E-mail, From Paul McLatchy III to Bill Loomis, etc..., "Minutes of December 20th, Revised"
- December 19, 2011 E-mail, from Judy Willis to Rowe School Committee, "Superintendent Evaluation and Conflict of Interest"
- GBB Staff Involvement, Draft Policy
- Letter to Residents, "Why We Urge You to Approve..."
- School Committee Chairman's Report, Rowe Goal Post, December 2011
- School Committee Chairman's Report, Rowe Goal Post, January 2012
- District Improvement Plan